

ST PAUL's ²
O P I N I O N
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J E S U S C H R I S T

S T A T E D :

K
Paul, Saint and Apostle.
IN A
LETTER TO A FRIEND.

B Y

A Member of the Church of *ENGLAND*.

Be not wise in your own conceits, Rom. xii. 16.

L O N D O N :

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ST PAUL's
O P I N I O N, &c.

MY OLD FRIEND,

I AM much surprized and concerned at the great revolution which hath taken place in your religious creed; I am informed you undeify our blessed Redeemer, and are metamorphosed into an Arian or Socinian, which of the two report doth not determine. What hath perverted you from holding fast that true faith which was delivered to saints, and which you have hitherto professed as a member of our established Church? What wonderful demonstration have you met with, of force sufficient to beat down the authority of Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles? I fear you have unwarily suffered yourself to be deluded by the artful reasonings of vain men, wise in their own conceits, who will not submit their understandings to the obe-

dience of faith, nor believe any revealed truth but what is agreeable to *their own* reason : and forget that the holy scriptures tell us, that the natural man, or *carnal reason*, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned : but let your departure from the faith be owing to what cause it may, it grieves me to the heart ; and I should not act the part of a friend if I did not exert my best, though weak, endeavours to convince you of your very dangerous error. As this strange alteration in your creed is recent and of late date, I hope you are not so firmly riveted in your new system as not to remain open to conviction, and that you will, upon a review of the argument, return to a better mind. Many excellent treatises have been published on this subject, which, in my opinion, afford a satisfaction little short of a mathematical demonstration, to which I might refer you ; but, as a proof of my sincere friendship, I beg leave to submit to your serious perusal the following Essay consisting for the most part of extracts, (arranged in my own method) from a pamphlet published about forty years ago, entitled, *Two Letters to a*

very

very eminent and learned Gentleman, attempting to subvert the Doctrines of the Arians, by a Country Gentleman. The author, I have been told, was a layman, and consequently under no professional obligation to support a system: perhaps his plain and familiar way of treating this argument may carry with it greater conviction than other more elaborate performances. But though my author shews that *Moses* and the Prophets, the Evangelists and Apostles, uniformly bear witness to the divine nature of JESUS CHRIST, yet what I chiefly purpose to lay before you is the evidence he adduces from the epistles of *St Paul*, and also from the peculiarity of his call to the office of an Apostle, occasionally inserting such observations and additional texts as the subject suggested to me: and I the rather choose to confine my argument chiefly to the testimony of *St Paul*, because you have ever been a professed admirer of him, as an acute reasoner, a clear writer, a pathetic speaker, and a zealous indefatigable champion of the Christian faith. If you have not changed your sentiments of this great Apostle, but do still believe him to have been divinely inspired, and commissioned to preach

the Gospel, you can have no reasonable objection to embrace, and die in that faith, which he taught, and doth still teach in his discourses and writings.

The question before us, is, What was *St Paul's* opinion of JESUS CHRIST? Which is a matter of fact, and therefore to be proved, not by the logic or philosophy of the schools, but by evidence,—the evidence of the great Apostle himself.

Now, Sir, *St Paul* tells us, as it is recorded in *Acts* xx. 27. that “ he hath not “ shunned to declare unto us the *whole counsel* of God :” and we can desire no more. To know what *that* was, we must recur to his epistles, and see *there* what he hath delivered concerning it. This is a better way to get information and satisfaction, than from all the debates and striving about words among men, who have many devices in their hearts ; but the counsel of the LORD (which *St Paul* declares to us) *that* alone shall stand, *Prov.* xix. 21. And though men of learning may seem to darken this counsel by words, without knowledge of the power and wisdom of God, yet it shall come to nothing : and therefore I will trace the Apostle through his writings,

writings, and see the mind of the Spirit, as to *this* counsel of God, which He hath revealed there, which he calls a Mystery *which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God*, Eph. iii. 9. and is yet hid from many of the wise and learned of this world, who will not allow any mystery of godliness at all. But let us attend a little to what St *Paul* says, who inculcated this doctrine in all his writings, which, being the language of inspiration, and intended for the instruction of the unlearned as well as the learned, must therefore be understood in their most plain and obvious sense. He says,

Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, Gal. i. 1. Pray, observe! not of *man*, neither by *men*, but by *Jesus Christ*: Who, therefore, must be something more than man.

Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, (or according to his human nature) *and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness*, (or according to his divine nature) Rom. i. 3, 4.

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Feed the church of God, which HE hath purchased with his own blood, Acts xx. 28.

HE! Who? That person who is both God and man, and therefore had blood to shed; the sense is very plain, and unless so explained is nonsense.

He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3.

Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. 6.

Can any mere creature be in the form of an invisible God? What philosophy teacheth this doctrine? And can any creature without the most aggravated guilt make himself equal with God?

He is called the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Tit. ii. 13.

Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5. Is this language applicable to a creature?

He is called God's own Son, Rom. viii. 3, 32. And although in a qualified sense angels may be called the sons of God, yet to which of them said he at any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, Heb. i. 5.*

In

In him dwelleth all the fulness (not only of the gifts and graces of God, but) *of the Godhead*, that is, of the Deity, *bodily*, Col. ii. 9. not symbolically, as in the ark, but essentially.

Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, Heb. i. 8. Is this language fit to be given to a creature?

Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, Heb. vii. 3.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8. therefore eternal.

He is the great God, Tit. ii. 13. *The Lord from heaven*, 1 Cor. xv. 47. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature*, Col. i. 15. which may be more truly rendered, he was before all creatures, or, he was begotten before all creation: what followeth makes this sense necessary, ver. 16. *for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him. Ver. 17. and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* Pray! mark the expressions: He was before ALL things: and

and ALL things universally, without exception, that were made, were made by Him: consequently He himself cannot be a creature.

But St *Paul* tells us not only that *JESUS CHRIST* made all things, but also, that he upholds, and governs all things:

By him *all things consist*, Col. i. 17. *He upholds all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3. or by his *own power*, as the original signifies. Observe! by his own power: it is not said, by a power derived to him from God, but by his own power.

He is omnipotent—*He is able to subdue all things to himself*, Phil. iii. 21.

He is omnipresent—*He fills all things*, Eph. iv. 10. Can a creature do this?

He *dwells in his peoples hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. who are called *the temple of God*, 2 Cor. vi. 16.

He is *the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. i. 8. What! a creature Lord of glory?

Let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6. What! worship a creature?

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, Phil. ii. 10. What! bow to a creature?

We shall all stand before the judgement-seat
of

of Christ, Rom. xiv. 10. *who shall judge the quick and the dead*, 2 Tim. iv. 1. *and will make manifest the counsels of the heart*, 1 Cor. iv. 5. Is a creature able to comprehend at one view all the actions, words and thoughts of all men from the creation of the world to the final consummation of it.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour, and glory, for ever, Amen, 1 Tim. i. 17.

—Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ — *who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see, to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen*, 1 Tim. vi. 14, 15, 16.

Are not the essential attributes of the Deity given, as fully, and emphatically, to JESUS CHRIST in the latter passage, as they are to GOD in the former? The inference is obvious: JESUS CHRIST is therefore GOD.

But to me it appears more than probable that the former passage as well as the latter is peculiarly descriptive of JESUS CHRIST: the context seems evidently to determine this

this—it runs thus—that in me first *Jesus Christ* might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible: Who can be this King eternal, immortal, invisible, but JESUS CHRIST mentioned in the preceding verse: for it is observable that in all this paragraph (*viz.* from *ver.* 12 to 17 inclusively) the Apostle mentions only JESUS CHRIST, whence it follows that JESUS CHRIST is the King eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise God, and consequently God in the highest and most proper sense, being the *only* God, of one undivided substance with the Father and Holy Ghost. No wonder then that *St Paul* doth so frequently in his epistles implore his divine grace and blessing upon churches and particular persons.

Now—our Lord *Jesus Christ* direct our way unto you, and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, 1 *Theff.* iii. 11, 12.

Now the Lord of peace (CHRIST) give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all, 2 *Theff.* iii. 16.

Now our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself—com-
fort

fort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work, 1 Theff. ii. 16.

Grace be to you and peace from—our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. i. 7.

To whom (CHRIST) be honour and power everlasting, 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, Philem. 25.

So I write, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, 2 Theff. iii. 17, 18.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Rom. xvi. 24. The grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ be with you, 1 Cor. xvi. 23.—What!

the grace of a creature! why not rather the grace of GOD? If JESUS CHRIST is not GOD, why is he invoked in the above passages to do what is proper to GOD only?

These, Sir, are only a small gleanings from the plentiful vintage of texts to the same purpose which are to be met with in the writings of St Paul, who in every one of his epistles declares to us the counsel of GOD in this important article of faith; and to shew that this was no novel doctrine of his own invention, he brings many quotations from the Old Testament to prove the Divinity of our blessed Redeemer, the long expected Messiah foretold by the Pro-

phets, which, that I may not tire your patience, I omit; but they are all upon record in his writings, to which I refer you.

Now, Sir, give me leave to ask you this question, *viz.* If JESUS CHRIST was not properly and truly God; to what purpose doth the Apostle in all his epistles ascribe to him the attributes of Divinity, and in confirmation thereof appeal to the testimony of the Prophets, and all this, without saying any thing to guide us into a contrary belief, or guard us against error or mistake? On other much less important occasions he observed a different conduct.

When he seemed to boast of his own performances, saying, *that he laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. he explains himself and says, *yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*: — but when he speaks of CHRIST, in the most exalted strains, he never puts in any caution to prevent our misunderstanding his words; no, not so much as once, in any of the texts before cited.

If CHRIST was a *mere creature*, there could be no reason to say, as the Apostle doth, without the least explanation, that he is *God over all, blessed for ever*. It would have been

been much more easy for him to say, that he was a *superangelic creature*, blessed for ever; and which it behoved him to say (had it been so) to prevent our running into errors concerning him. But the Apostle says he useth great plainness of speech, 2 Cor. iii. 12. and surely, if what he writes is plain, we are to understand him in that *plain way* in which he expresth himself, or else he will be to us a *barbarian*, and may as well speak to us in an unknown tongue.

He doth not say any where, take heed lest ye misunderstand any of my phrases, or expressions, concerning CHRIST; which surely he would have done had any of them carried a secret, or contrary meaning. But he says, *Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*, Col. ii. 8. and then he adds, *ver. 9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. Here is no caution against believing that the Godhead dwells in CHRIST bodily, but against *philosophy*, and the rudiments of the world, or rules of human reasoning, to prove divine truths; as if he had foreseen, that men would deny the Deity of CHRIST, and believe nothing that is revealed, but what

they could *philosophically prove*, or *mathematically demonstrate*. But, says he, beware of such *philosophy*, for it is *vain deceit*: and take this truth upon my word, JESUS CHRIST is God, (*viz.*) *in him dwells the Godhead bodily*, and he is *God over all, blessed for ever*.

Again, he says, O *Timothy*—*avoid* (not only) *profane*, but *vain babblings*, and *opposition of science*, *falsely so called*, which some *professing*, have *erred from the truth*, 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. Now what can this opposition of science be, but attempting to prove the mysteries of the Gospel philosophically, or by school-arguments, which when they fail to do, there is an opposition of science? Revelation opposeth philosophy, and philosophy opposeth revelation, and the professor, not being able to reconcile them, falls from the faith, or errs from the truth, because he cannot demonstrate the mysteries of the Gospel to his reason, or reconcile them to the laws of disputation, which in this matter are but vain babblings; and whether this be the real meaning of that text or not, I am sure it may be so explained, and with great probability too.

You have seen, Sir, from St *Paul's* epistles what was his opinion of JESUS CHRIST; how uniformly he asserts his divine nature; and

and with what great care he guards his converts to the faith against being led astray by philosophy, vain deceit, or artful reasonings of men of corrupt minds : but his testimony to this doctrine will have the greater weight of evidence, if we recollect his conduct and sentiments before his conversion, and the manner how he was instructed in the whole scheme of redemption by JESUS CHRIST.

St *Paul* before his conversion was a Pharisee, one of the strictest sects among the Jews, and which always discovered the bitterest enmity to CHRIST. He was a great enemy to idolatry, and trusting to his own righteousness, which was of the Law, had no notion of redemption by a crucified Saviour ; and on that account seems to have had an implacable hatred to CHRIST and his doctrine, and with unremitted rage and cruelty persecuted all his disciples : now the testimony of such a witness in favour of CHRIST must certainly be unexceptionable.

—After his miraculous conversion St *Paul* himself positively declares that he had no instruction from any *man*, Gal. i. 12. and that he did not go up to *Jerusalem* to be instructed by the Apostles there, but immediately went into *Arabia*, ver. 17. and that

it was three years ere he went to *Jerusalem*, where he saw *Peter*, and saw none else, save *James* the LORD's brother, *ver.* 18, 19. and that when he did see them and other of the Apostles on a second journey to *Jerusalem*, *Gal.* ii. 1. they in conference, or in the discourse he had with them concerning the faith, added nothing to him; did not inform him in any article of Christian faith which he did not before know. Yet you have seen that his writings abound with the most pompous expressions of our LORD's Divinity, and such as are to be found no where else: Pray, Sir, how came St *Paul* to know, that JESUS CHRIST was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person? — that he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God? — that he is God over all, blessed for ever? — that he is the image of the invisible God? — that in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead, bodily? and divers other expressions which are too high to be applicable to any creature? — Who told St *Paul* all this? Why, says he, *Gal.* i. 12. “My Gospel is not after men, neither received I it of *man*, but was taught it by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST:” many of this Apostle's expressions are so peculiarly his
own

own, and contain such sublime sentiments of the personal dignity of JESUS CHRIST, that it is utterly incredible he should derive them from any source but revelation. If then JESUS CHRIST, who best knew what himself was, did reveal these things to *St Paul*, who expressly assures us that he had them not from man, but from JESUS CHRIST, the natural and undeniable inference is, that he is GOD, or *God over all, blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. or *God manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. How came *St Paul* thus to write of CHRIST, of whom but lately he was a persecutor? Had he been only a man, these expressions had not only been needless, but blasphemous; yet *St Paul* had this doctrine, *not from man*, but from CHRIST himself, which could not be true if CHRIST was a mere man, for he had it from him only; therefore he is GOD; deny the consequence who can.

St Paul knew that dreadful text full well, "Curfed be the man that trusteth in man," Jer. xvii. 5. yet he trusted in JESUS CHRIST, and desired to be found in him, having on his righteousness; and says, that there is no salvation in any other; and if this be not to bring himself under a curse, if CHRIST be a mere man, I know not what is.

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He knew also that remarkable text, *Isa.* xl. 18 and 25. that none but God can be compared with God, that none is like him but himself, and that he hath no equal : There can be no image of the invisible God by any creature, and yet *St Paul* assures us that JESUS CHRIST is the image of the invisible God, and that JESUS CHRIST being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be his equal ; and no marvel, for he that is in *the form of* God, must be God essential ; the thing is undeniable — and therefore CHRIST is GOD essential ; and this he himself revealed to *St Paul*, and is therefore true.

And now, if after all this CHRIST was not God equal with the Father, either (1) *St Paul* must be an impostor in pretending to receive his revelations from JESUS CHRIST when he did not : or (2) these revelations were diabolical delusions, and a lie : or (3) those writings which go in *St Paul's* name are spurious, and none of his : or (4) we must not believe our senses, when we read his writings, but the direct contrary to what he affirms, when he says those things.

There are various other passages in *St Paul's* epistles which I might have produced in support of the same doctrine, but

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as those I have recited are very plain and express to the point, and withal sufficiently numerous to establish the doctrine I contend for, I forbear to trouble you with any more; if those already produced do not convince you, none will: what is demonstrated in one way is as certain, as if it was demonstrated in an hundred. But, alas! we meet with some persons who seem resolved not to be convinced even by the clearest evidence; and St *Peter's* observation is every day verified, who, speaking of St *Paul's* epistles, says, *in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*, 2 Pet. iii. 16. Now, Why may not St *Peter*, among other things, have an eye to those many texts in St *Paul's* epistles which speak of our Saviour's Divinity; these may be called hard to be understood, or hard to be believed, by those that are unlearned in the wisdom that is from above, and are unstable, or wavering in their opinion of what is revealed in the holy scriptures, so that they wrest them unto their own destruction: —They wrest them! Pray, what is it to wrest the scriptures, but to go from their plain and literal meaning, to force them to speak

speak directly contrary to what is expressed
 in the text? For to believe the scriptures
 as they plainly speak, can, with no sense,
 be said to *wrest* them: but he wrests them,
 who forces a meaning from them, contrary,
 not only to their universal analogy, and
 agreement one with another, but contrary
 to the very letter and evident meaning of
 every text there; that doth square with some
 darling notion or philosophical scheme of
 his own. If I say, as the text plainly doth,
In the beginning—the Word was God, I do
 not wrest that text. But if I say, *In the*
beginning—the Word was [A] God, as the
 Arians do, I wrest it most abominably, and
 so of the rest.

Is it not very surprizing and unaccount-
 able that not only *St Paul*, but all the writ-
 ers of the New Testament, should bear uni-
 form testimony to the divine nature of JE-
 SUS CHRIST? And when we recollect that
 they published their writings at different
 times and in distant countries, it must ap-
 pear absolutely incredible, that they should
 all agree in this most important doctrine,
 if it were not true; or that they should
 ascribe to JESUS CHRIST the incommuni-
 cable attributes of the Deity, if he were
 only a creature: To what purpose should
 they

they do it? Why should they thus rob God
 of his glory, which he hath declared he will
 not part with, *Isa. xlii. 8*? or what end did
 this way of writing answer, but to lead all
 future disciples of JESUS into direct idolatry?
 I allow indeed that JESUS CHRIST himself
 did not say *in so many words*, that he was
 GOD *equal with the Father*, but he said what
 was equivalent to it, and appealed to his
 works for evidence of the truth: he said
so much, that the Jews accused him of blas-
 phemy for saying GOD was his Father,
 thereby *making himself equal with God*: which
 charge he never denied: and it appears evi-
 dent to me from the history of his trial that
 the high priest and the Sanhedrim pro-
 nounced him guilty of death for asserting
 that he was the Son of GOD; which in their
 conceptions was making himself equal with
 GOD.—If JESUS CHRIST be only a creature,
 why have we not some plain texts of scrip-
 ture to tell us so? or to what end or pur-
 pose are all those strong and unequivocal
 expressions used in the holy scriptures, that
 declare him to be GOD? or why are they
 not laid down with some limitation in the
 texts themselves? This might easily have
 been done in so very essential a matter, had
 he been a creature, and no more. But me-
 thinks

thinks I hear you reply, "JESUS CHRIST himself hath done this; He hath in plain and exprefs terms acknowledged his own inferiority to his Father: for doth he not say, "My Father is greater than I?" If then, say you, the Father be greater than the Son, it necessarily follows that the Son (*i. e.* JESUS CHRIST) cannot be equal to the Father, and consequently not God of the same divine nature. This text alone is thought by some gentlemen of your persuasion to be sufficiently decisive: but, Sir, I am so far from joining issue with them, that, in my opinion, these words, if duly considered, will afford a very strong argument for the divine nature of JESUS CHRIST: for though you will not allow him to be God, yet you must acknowledge he was a man of good sense and sound understanding: now affix your meaning to these words, "My Father "is greater than I?" What information do they convey? Why, forsooth, he tells his disciples what they, and every man in the world, knew as well before, *viz.* that the Creator is greater than the creature: this is such egregious trifling that it would be unbecoming a man of plain common sense to deliver it as an axiom of importance. This then cannot be the primary meaning of the words.

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The distance between Creator and creature is infinite, and doth not admit of comparison : “ To whom will ye liken me, or make me equal, saith the holy One,” *Isa. xl. 25*? But certainly there must be some just ground of comparison between JESUS and his Father, otherwise we cannot suppose he would have made one : but nothing finite can be compared to infinite : to justify the assertion as consistent with common sense, we must suppose JESUS to be infinite as well as his Father : On any other supposition the assertion is trifling and impertinent. When JESUS spake these words, his meaning might be, My Father, as *Father*, is greater than I, as *Son*, or as *Mediator*. But whatever information He intended to convey to his disciples by this comparison, it must appear evident to common sense, that the words will not admit of your interpretation, and consequently your opinion can derive no support from this text, which rather militates against you.

Permit me to take notice of another Text which is often produced as a proof that the Son is not omniscient, *viz.* Mark xiii. 32. JESUS saith, “ Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the
C “ Father.”

“Father.” If the Son be ignorant of the day of judgement (say our adversaries) he cannot be omniscient, consequently not God equal with the Father. In reply I say, Jesus doth not in this passage speak of the last judgement: the former part of the chapter is a prophecy of the entire destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the many portentous signs and prodigies which should precede that disastrous event; by the coming to pass of these Jesus says the destruction of *Jerusalem* might be known to be approaching. “When ye see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors,” *ver.* 29. Verily, I say unto you, This “generation shall not pass till all these things be done,” *ver.* 30. Heaven and “earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away,” *ver.* 31. Then follows *ver.* 32. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”—That only the destruction of *Jerusalem* is the subject of this prophecy must be evident to every attentive reader, and therefore the words, “Of that day knoweth no man, neither the Son,” must be so interpreted as to be consistent with what goes before. That Jesus himself knew the day and hour of the destruction of *Jerusalem* seems evident from the context, otherwise how could he foretel the various signs which should precede and precisely mark

mark the time of it to be before that generation should pass away: but though he knew it himself, he was not commissioned by his Father to *make it known* to others, for so the Greek word may be translated *. Jesus communicated as much as was proper for his disciples to know concerning this grand event, but he kept them in ignorance of the precise day when it would happen, in order to excite them to watchfulness and prayer, which he exhorts them to in the next verse, 33. "Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is:" so that this Text is no proof that the Son is not omniscient, but, if considered in conjunction with the context, rather proves that he is.

We shall do well to remember that the scriptures tell us, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. and that there shall be false teachers who shall bring in damnable *heresies*, even denying the LORD that bought them, 2 *Pet.* ii. 1. Now what can be a more notorious departing from the faith, than to deny the LORD that bought them? and what can that denial be, but denying his Deity? For was that denial to be a renouncing Christianity, it could not be called *heresy*, but apostacy; and therefore to depart from the faith, in the sense of scripture, is to deny CHRIST

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* See Macknight on this verse in his *Harmony of the Gospels*.

to be God, or those texts are inconclusive; for no man can *properly* be said to depart from the faith of CHRIST, who doth not either deny his Divinity, or renounce Christianity, and so by one of them, deny the LORD that bought him. Where the term *heresy* is used, it necessarily supposeth a Christian church; and in such a church, what is departing from the faith, and what is denying the LORD that bought us, if denying him to be God is not? Be pleased, Sir, seriously to consider these things; and to remember that whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father, 1 *John* ii. 23. and “whosoever shall confess me before “men,” saith CHRIST, “him shall the Son “of man confess before the angels of God; “but he that denieth me before men, shall “be denied before the angels of God.” And this puts me in mind of that awful tribunal before which you and I must one day stand, for “we must all appear before the judgment seat of CHRIST,” 2 *Cor.* v. 10. and therefore it greatly concerns us to inquire (each one for himself) what will be our case at that great assize.

At that awful day JESUS CHRIST will be our Judge; and if *your* proposition be *true*, I have honoured him more than was commanded; but if *mine* be *true*, you have dishonoured him very much, by putting him that is God on a level with a creature; and instead of honouring him as you do the Father,

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ther, you deny him any religious honour, or at the most give him only a subordinate kind of honour ; and then I am sure yours is the most dangerous side of the question. For, suppose I honour him more than is really commanded ; it is, at most, but a work of supererrogation, and following the letter of those plain texts of scripture, which are the statute-law of heaven ; on which account I am under an invincible (and therefore a justifiable) necessity of believing on him, as I do ; for having no other law to direct me, I must necessarily believe, as that appears to direct me in the very plain letter of it ; and the Judge of all the earth cannot but do right, and will never condemn me, for giving him the same honour which I give to the Father, when I have his own direction ; and that in words so very express, that if I must not take the texts relating to it in their literal sense, I never know what meaning or sense to put upon any text whatever ; nor *which* to take in a *literal*, and which in a *metaphorical* sense ; for, as where there is no law there is no transgression, so where there is a law, it can be no transgression, to take its meaning from the plain letter of it : and where there is no transgression there can be no condemnation ; so that if there was a possibility of my being mistaken herein, my eternal welfare must be safe, provided my works justify my faith ; and, when weighed in the balance, are not found wanting ; for

I do not suppose that this faith *alone* will carry me to heaven.

And if my Saviour should then ask me, *Who dost thou say that I am?* and I should answer, with *Thomas, My Lord and my God*: and he should condescend to demand upon what grounds I build that faith? I might with great humility and adoration reply, that the sacred scriptures in very plain and express terms informed me so; and say, LORD, I read there that Thou, the *divine Word*, wast in the beginning with GOD, and wast GOD; that Thou didst lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, and that Thou didst also create principalities, and powers, and that all things were not only created *by thee*, but *for thee*, and that *by thee* all things consist: that all the angels are commanded to worship thee; and, I find, that I am commanded to honour thee, even as I honour the Father, which honour cannot be paid to thee, but by prayer, adoration, and praise, which are due to GOD *only*: — that the writings of all thy Evangelists and Apostles, more especially of thy faithful servant *Paul*, who says he received his Gospel from Thee by immediate inspiration, bear witness to thy Divinity, and declare, not only that Thou art the image of the invisible God, but that Thou art GOD over all, blessed for ever, the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty; that in thee dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and

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that the Father and Thou art one: and since Thou didst not think it any robbery to be equal with God, how durst I, a poor, sinful worm, think thee not *equal*, or rob thee of thy Deity? and therefore I have worshipped thee, as *my Lord and my God*. And besides, I find also in the sacred records, that Thou searchest the heart, art omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and whatsoever the Father doth, without exception, that dost Thou likewise, and that he that hath seen Thee, hath seen the Father also, and that Thou art the great God, the true God, and eternal life, &c.

And suppose now, that such interrogatories and answers were really certain to occur at that day (as who knows but they may? for we find a dialogue of another sort will, *Matt. xxv.*) and supposing that I have been mistaken in the meaning of the abovesaid (and such other) texts; (which if we are sure of the plain meaning of any words, is utterly impossible, or if these are not part of the sacred canon, we never can be certain of any being *so*) I say, supposing all this, yet having no other rule for my faith, I shall not be condemned, for not reading the text backwards, or not taking it in a sense *directly contrary* to its very letter; but shall be equally as safe, as those that have another *creed*.

And farther, supposing on the other side, that the Judge should demand of one of a
contrary

contrary faith, What dost *thou* say that I am?—and he should answer a CREATURE. And suppose it should be further demanded, why he so believed when the texts just now named, and a multitude of others evince the contrary, in the most plain expressions? and suppose he should reply that he could not understand those texts in their plain and obvious sense, because that to suppose that the divine and human nature were so united as to constitute one person, and yet remain two distinct natures, was a doctrine that had no foundation in natural religion, and is unintelligible, if not contrary to the common sense of mankind. And therefore the texts abovenamed, and all others of the like import, which speak of thee as God essential, are either interpolated, or misinterpreted, or should be so explained and understood as to be consistent with the sense and meaning of those other texts of scripture which speak of thee as a creature only.

I say, suppose the case should so happen, and that notwithstanding, JESUS CHRIST should be really God and man, as we have asserted, and do assert, how must such a person be confounded? how will he tremble before his Judge, and his God?—Will there be no difference? or will the righteous Judge make none between the reasons given by the one, and by the other, for their faith? The scriptures are so plain in this point, that
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he that runs may read them, and he that is willing to bring corrupt reasoning to the obedience of faith and revelation, may easily understand them: therefore, to plead ignorance before our Judge, or farther to allege, that *this part* of the sacred records was doubted of in *such a century*; and that in *such an age*, *such a text*, or *such a part*, was not owned by *such a father*, or not found in *such an ancient copy*, or differently interpreted by some very learned doctors, &c. I say, such pretences will be a too thin fig-leaf covering for infidelity.—We have the sure word of prophecy, to which we are to take heed. The Gospel of JESUS CHRIST is what we shall be judged by another day, when human reasoning will be struck dumb. Then may CHRIST very justly say, as in *John v. 39, 40.* to all such as denied his Divinity, Why did you not search and believe the scriptures, in order to eternal life, for *those are they which testified of me? But ye would not come unto me that ye might have life*, for whom the Father hath sent (and who is one with him) Him ye believed not.

The scriptures are very plain relating to JESUS CHRIST, and we are directed, not to *comprehend*, nor *dispute*, but *believe*. I will not take upon me to prejudge, nor to say, how far the mercies of CHRIST may extend to such criminals, at *that dreadful day*. But I desire not to be one of that number.

And

And to sum up all; This will be the case at that day; he that *now* believes in CHRIST, as God, if he should be *then mistaken* (as to that point) will, as to his eternal state, be *secure*; when he that *now* denies his Divinity, if at that day he should be mistaken, will! Oh—what shall I say?—the best that I can think is, that his state is very *doubtful* and hazardous, if not deplorable and desperate.

It is worthy of our most serious attention, that we are to be saved by grace, through faith: but faith depends not on an empty name, but hath respect to the nature of the person believed in: no man can be said to believe in God, that knows nothing of his nature, or denies his operations and attributes; nor can any man be said to believe in CHRIST, that denies him to be IMMANUEL, or God-man in one person; for in denying *that*, he denies his person, and removes the true object of Christian faith, and introduceth another: and as none will say, but that he who denies the essential perfections of God, denies God himself; so it will follow, that he who denies the Deity of CHRIST, denies CHRIST himself:—As for example, suppose any man should be so mad as to deny, that God is *holy*, in so doing, he denieth him to be God, because holiness is essential to his nature: so in like manner, he that chooses a CHRIST, that is not God and man, chooses such an one, as is not the

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CHRIST of GOD ; for *his* CHRIST is the *Word*, which, in the beginning, was with God, and *was God*, and, in time, took flesh, and dwelt amongst us ; but the other is a *mere creature*, of a man's own making, and devising, which the scriptures of truth know nothing of.

Let me then (my dear friend) earnestly beseech you seriously to consider, whether the JESUS you believe in, and depend upon for salvation, is *that Jesus* whom St *Paul* preached ; for, assuredly, this is a most important inquiry : It is not a mere speculative point, in which you may innocently err ; but your everlasting happiness or misery depend upon it. If any man preacheth another JESUS, saith St *Paul*—or though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed, *Gal. i. 8.* which dreadful denunciation he repeats, *ver. 9.* that it may make the deeper impression on our minds, in order to excite us with the greater care and steadfastness, to hold fast that form of words and sound doctrine, which was once delivered to the saints. If you really are a lover of truth, you will consider this subject without partiality or prepossession : do not suffer your judgement to be biassed by great names, or by the learning or philosophy of any man whatever. Have recourse to the oracles of God (the fountain of divine truth) which

which alone can make you wise unto salvation : read with an honest heart and upright intention, comparing scripture with scripture, resolving to embrace the truth as delivered by the holy Apostles and Prophets : always remembering, that “ we are
 “ not sufficient of ourselves, to think any
 “ thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency
 “ is of God,” 2 Cor. iii. 5. If therefore you desire to know the truth, do not fail to offer up your fervent prayers to Almighty God, that he would open your understanding, that you may understand the scriptures. “ If
 “ any man lack wisdom,” saith St James,
 “ let him ask of God, who giveth liberally,
 “ and upbraideth not, and it shall be given
 “ him;” but that your prayers may be heard, you must ask with humility, having a thorough consciousness of the weakness of your own understanding to receive and embrace divine truths; for “ God resisteth the
 “ proud, but giveth grace to the humble,” James iv. 6.

Whatever judgement you may pass on this little piece, compiled for the most part with borrowed materials, please to receive it with candour, and as a proof of my earnest desire to promote your comfort in this life, and your everlasting happiness in the next.

I am, with great esteem,

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